DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 053 034 SO 001 620

AUTHOR Stern, Robert
TITLE An Introductory Course in Indian Studies for Small Colleges: A Suggested Annotated Syllabus.
INSTITUTION Educational Resources Center, New Delhi (India).
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.; State Univ. of New York, Albany.
PUB DATE [69]
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Area Studies, *Asian History, Concept Teaching, *Cross Cultural Studies, Curriculum Guides, Higher Education, Humanities, Interdisciplinary Approach, *Non Western Civilization, *Political Science, Small Schools, Social Sciences, Undergraduate Study, World History
IDENTIFIERS Asia, *India

ABSTRACT

The author outlines an introductory undergraduate course in Indian Studies constructed on the configuration of a social science cluster built around a central disciplinary core of political science. The objective of the course is to build an understanding of contemporary India. As a matter of convenience and organization the course is divided into four historical periods: Ancient India, Muslim India, British India, and Independent India; this provides the opportunity to introduce historical background material systematically, and starting points to introduce certain present day institutions and processes with roots in another era. Family, caste, village, and linguistic area are described, conceptualized, and discussed; reading selections are included. Suggested media techniques include: showings of slides; photographs of people at work; exhibitions of artifacts, art, and handicrafts; educational and commercial films; and an annual recorded concert of Indian music. SO 001 619 through SO 001 623 are related documents. (Author/SBE)

ED053034

SP 001 620

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

AN INTRODUCTORY COURSE IN INDIAN STUDIES FOR SMALL COLLEGES
A SUGGESTED ANNOTATED SYLLABUS

BY ROBERT STERN

The Educational Resources Center

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
NEW DELHI, INDIA

AN INTRODUCTORY COURSE IN INDIAN STUDIES FOR SMALL COLLEGES

by Robert Stern

The question is how to teach an introductory course in Indian studies to undergraduate students at a small to medium size American college. I have struggled with this problem for a number of years and at a few institutions, and for whatever they are worth I pass on to you some of my observations and a skeletal version of the course outline that I have found most satisfactory.

The Wisconsin syllabus (Joseph W. Elder, ed. Civilization of India Syllabus. Madison, University of Wisconsin, 1965) is most helpful as a guide and a bibliography, particularly for the instructor who is new to Indian studies, but to the instructor at a small institution it is not likely to give much aid and comfort as a syllabus. It assumes a large university which has on its faculty a dozen or so people in the various disciplines who have a specialized interest in Indian studies and a budget which can bring to the campus visiting lecturers who have the expertise which the university's faculty lacks. These faculty people develop lecture series on specialized aspects of Indian studies and these in turn are integrated into a general introductory course. The India specialist at a small institution, of course, confronts an entirely different situation. It is more than likely that he will be the only one among his colleagues who has such a specialization and any teaching that he is going to do about India he will more than likely have to do alone.

It seems to me that the alternatives that ought to be avoided in such a solo performance are: (a) To try to teach a purely disciplinary course in some limited

aspect of Indian studies. Most students simply lack the general background in Indian studies which alone can make such a course meaningful to them, and the instructor is likely to run himself, his students, and his course ragged by going back and forth to provide this background material. (b) To try to teach a course in "Indian Civilization" as a virtuoso performance in the grand manner. I can think of only one man who might be able to pull this off in an academically respectable fashion, and he has spent about forty years studying India and is a world famous Indologist. Fortunately these are not the only alternatives.

It is of course possible to introduce some very limited aspects of Indian studies in a course in which they are compared in some systematic fashion to similar limited aspects of other societies. For example, I teach a course in comparative politics in which the Indian political system is one of four or five such systems analyzed within a disciplinary framework. This, of course, is not a course in Indian studies. However, it is also possible for a lone instructor to teach an academically respectable introductory course in Indian studies by means of what, for lack of better terms, might be called a restricted civilizational or an expanded disciplinary approach. This is the alternative that concerns me here.

The disciplinary pigeon holes that American academia has constructed over the years and now finds more and more confining are I think, of particularly limited usefulness for Indian studies. So many aspects of Indian society are so bound up together that it is usually quite difficult to separate them into disciplinary competences. While no one scholar can possibly become familiar with more than a small part of the whole, it is equally true that one cannot really do one's job as a student of India if one stays very strictly within

disciplinary confines. Over the years, one becomes by necessity if not by choice a limited generalist or, if you wish, an expanded specialist. So, for example, the political scientist specializing in Indian studies may know very little about Indian music, art, literature, and so forth. But he must know something about some aspects of history, economics, anthropology, sociology, and language. In other words, I think what tends to happen to the India specialist who comes to the field from a discipline is that he develops a limited competence in a broad general category of "humanities" or "social sciences" built around a central disciplinary core. What I have outlined here is an introductory course in Indian studies constructed on this configuration. The central core is political science, my discipline. But it is our hope that the outline will be suggestive of how such a course can be arranged for faculty people other than political scientists.

The objective of the course is to introduce students to an understanding of contemporary India through the use of political science and a social science cluster built around it. As a matter of convenience and organization the course is divided into four "historical" periods: Ancient India, Muslim India, British India, and Independent India. These periods are treated historically only in the sense that they provide opportunities to introduce more-or-less systematically historical background material that is relevant to the course objective and they provide starting points to introduce certain institutions and processes which have their roots in a particular era but whose development can be carried down to the present. This arrangement will become clearer, I think, as the outline develops.

I. Ancient India

A. Historical background. I find it most useful to orient the discussion to political history and certain related aspects of social history, and to how the society integrated external and internal migrants, adjusted itself to cycles of despotism and anarchy, and particularly, how the burdens of "system maintenance and adaptation" fell to the institutions of the "little society".

B. The institutions of the "little society": family, caste, village, and linguistic area.

1. Family. I begin with a general description of the patrilineal and patrilocal extended family, and then on to its functioning in India today, the problems that it presents to "modernization" and its continuing utility in a sporadically and unevenly developing society. A number of specific topics can be introduced here. For example, the conflict between the government's programs of family planning and its inability to provide particularly the rural population with the assurances and services that are now provided by sons. Since the family is the basic social unit, a discussion of it necessarily leads to a discussion of the next basic unit, caste, of which family is an integral and sustaining part.

2. Caste. I spend some time discussing the structure and the functioning of caste systems and their religious-philosophical underpinnings. I am particularly interested in having the students appreciate these

systems' capacities for change and adaption, particularly in such matters as the relationships between caste and class, social mobility, and castes' contemporary manifestations as associations and federations in a democratic political system.

3. Village. This is the smallest "arena" in which people of different families and castes meet. I discuss the "traditional" social, economic and political relations among these people in a "typical" Indian village, and how these relations have changed and are changing under the impact of industrialization, urbanization, modern transportation and communication, the "green revolution", and increased politicization as a result of parliamentary democracy and panchayati raj.

4. The linguistic area. While India's linguistic diversity has its roots in its ancient past, linguistic units have not become "institutionalized" into political units until recently. Students should have some familiarity with India's language map and the conversion of that map into a political one. This is an appropriate place to introduce them to language as a social and political issue, and to the conflicts between English vs. Hindi vs. the regional languages as mediums of higher education, law, administration, and so forth. I have not done it as yet, but I think that when I teach this course again I will use Maharashtrian linguistic-provincialism as a "case study".

C. Bibliography. Because of the students' general lack of background information in Indian studies, I tend to prefer complete books, particularly paperbacks, rather than articles in scholarly journals as the basic bibliography. These readings can of course be supplemented by materials in journals, not only scholarly journals but Indian mixed-content and political publications as well, eg. Link, Seminar, Economic and Political Weekly. Readings from magazines of this latter sort not only provide students with course material, but also help to introduce India "realia" about which I will say more below. What follows here and in succeeding bibliography section in this outline is not meant to be taken as a complete bibliography so much as suggestions of a few helpful books.

Selections from A.L. Basham, The Wonder that was India, N.Y.: Grove Press 1954 are excellent as an introduction to ancient India. For the rest I would suggest: William H & Charlotte V. Wiser, Behind Mud Walls, 1930-60, Berkeley, University of California, 2nd rev. ed. 1963; S.C. Dube's Indian Village, Ithaca, Cornell University, 1955; L.I. & S.H. Rudolph, Modernity of Tradition (first part), University of Chicago, 1968; M.N. Srinivas, Social Change in Modern India, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1966; and selections from Selig S. Harrison, India: The Most Dangerous Decades, Princeton University, 1960.

II. Muslim India

A. Basically what I try to provide students with here is some insight into the continuing and changing relationships of cooperation and conflict between Indian Muslims and Hindus from the beginning down to the present. This means giving them some information about

Muslim penetrations into India and the establishment and decay of Muslim kingdoms and empires, some knowledge of the impact of Islam on Indian society and the various attempts at Hindu-Muslim syncretism, and some understanding of the political, sociological, economic, and religious sources of Hindu-Muslim conflict. An important by product of this discussion is to give students some feeling for the continuity of Indian history. If I am feeling particularly intrepid at this point, I introduce a discussion of Pakistan, as such.

B. Bibliography. Selections from W.C. Smith, Islam in Modern History, Princeton, Princeton University, 1957; and Ram Gopal, Indian Muslims: A Political History (1858-1947), N.Y: Asia Publishing House, 1959.

III. British India

A. I orient this discussion to what I call the dialectic of emulation and separation. That is, as a result of the colonial experience a new Indian elite was created or refashioned from its Muslim era precursors. It adopted the English language, English manners, attitudes, and ideals, English forms of political and social organization, but at the same time it increasingly used these adoptions to try to distinguish and separate itself and its country from the British. In other words, I try to analyze British colonialism in India, particularly its socio-political and economic aspects, in relation to the nationalist movement (and its precursors) that this colonialism engendered. This discussion can be brought down to the

present by means of an analysis of the social and political implications of the continuing post-independence movements to replace English by Indian languages as mediums of university instruction. I also introduce a discussion here of the princely states, their relationships with British India and the nationalist movement, and what has become of them and their rulers and why.

B. Bibliography. Parts of Thomas George Percival Spear, A History of India, Vol. II, Baltimore: Penguin, 1965 and the book of readings on British colonialism in the same series as Embree's collection on 1857, Martin D. Lewis, The British in India: Imperialism or Trusteeship? Boston: D.C. Heath, 1962.

IV. Independent India

A. This is the place to sum up, to try to tie together some of the loose threads in the preceding sections. In doing so it is possible to introduce some new material or at least some new formulations. For example some of the topics that I have dealt with in recent years are:
1. The unresolved conflict between equity and productivity as the goals of economic development.
2. The erosion of the Congress party as the Indian political system's "one dominant party".
3. The development of "organized pluralism" (the increasing formation of associations and federations) and its limitations as a means of democratic political and economic development.

4. Indian federalism.

B. Bibliography. There are any number of acceptable books about Indian politics and politically related matters. I select them on the basis of the topics with which I plan to deal. For example, W.H. Morris-Jones, The Government & Politics of India, 2nd ed. London: Hutchinson, 1967; Myron Weiner, The Politics of Scarcity: Public Pressure and Political Response in India, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962; Paul R. Brass, Factional Politics in an Indian State: The Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh, University of California, 1965; Marc Franda, West Bengal and the Federalizing Process in India, Princeton University Press, 1968, and so forth.

I think that it is important for the India specialist to develop a layman's interest in aspects of Indian studies beyond his scholarly competence and to be willing to present these interests to his students as a layman. India tends to be a very unreal place for those who have never lived here. And making it "real" to undergraduate students is I think an unavoidable part of engaging their interest in course work. I have tried to do this job by periodic showings of slides that my wife and I have taken here and that we can comment on at first hand. Photographs of different people at work and in various social situations are invariably more interesting than pictures of legislative assemblies and historical monuments. We have also tried to connect the pictures

that we have taken with some of the artifacts that we have collected. Not only art objects, but handicrafts, cloth, popular religious posters, folios of miniature reproductions, and even kitchenware. At least once a year I schedule a recorded concert of India music, both classical and from the films, and this has usually met with considerable succes. We have also made available in the College library a number of Indian novels either written in or translated into English. Educational and commercial films are also an important resource.